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Patagonia SH 1

THE PATAGONIAN AND PAMPEAN HUNTERS

By JOHN M. COOPER

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Pa T 131 The section of the Pampa which here interests us (map 1, *Nos. 1D, 1E, 1F;* map 2) extends about 600 miles (960 km.) north to south from about a line between Córdoba and the mouth of the La Plata to a line between the Río Colorado and the Río Negro (pl. 3, *bottom, right;* pl. 4, *top, left*), where Patagonia begins, and thence stretches about 1,000 miles (1,600 km.) from north to south to the Strait of Magellan and the isthmus connecting Brunswick Peninsula with the mainland. The Pampa is a low-lying plain, nowhere over 1,000 feet (305 m.) above sea level, except for the Sierra del Tandil and Sierra de la Ventana in southern Buenos Aires Province. Apart from the low coastal belt, Patagonia is mostly a broken tableland, one to five thousand feet above sea level (pls. 1 and 2).

Pa T 132 Average temperatures at Buenos Aires, near the northeastern limit of the Pampa, are 48.9° F. in July, the coldest month, and 73.6° in January, the warmest month; at Choele-Choel, near the border line between the Pampa and Patagonia, 45.1° and 75.4°; at Santa Cruz, in far southern Patagonia, 35.2° and 58.6° (cf. New York City, 30.6° in January and 73.5° in July). The Pampa is marked by frequent steady-blowing high winds; Patagonia, by still more frequent blustery violent winds from the west and southwest.

Pa T 137 The eastern, or Humid Pampa, is, or was, treeless grassland (pl. 3, *top, right,* and *bottom, left;* pl. 4, *top, right*); the western or Dry Pampa (pl. 3, *top, left*), xerophytic scrub-tree and bush land; most of Patagonia has cover largely like that of the Dry Pampa, but considerable grassland especially in the western part. Along the piedmont and eastern slopes of the Andean Cordillera flanking the Pampa and Patagonia to the west, is a broken forest belt (pl. 4, *bottom, left* and *right*), constituting an extension of the Antarctic flora with its beeches and other characteristic trees and shrubs. (For fuller details on environment, cf.: Jones, 1930; James, 1942.)

Pa T 136 Of the land fauna, the most important from the native standpoint were the guanaco (*Lama glama guanicoe:* Cabrera and Yepes, 1940,

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the southern part of Tierra del Fuego, came into sight, appearing to rise out of the water, ninety miles distant, if not more. Steaming along the coast through numerous beds of the characteristic kelp seaweed, which in the most forcible way attracted our attention, by fouling the screw, and holding the ship as if anchored for about an hour, we passed Cape Negro, and opened completely different scenery. Instead of undulating plains, hills thickly wooded were seen; at the foot of one of which, on a low piece of flat ground, numerous horsemen, dressed in gay-coloured ponchos, were visible, careering about.

It was the afternoon of Sunday, which in all Spanish South American countries is a gala day, more or less appropriated to horse-racing. However, the sight of a steamer appeared to cause a diversion, and, in fact, a general race to the settlement ensued, all being apparently anxious for anything new or strange. The anchor was soon dropped, near an American schooner lying off the Sandy Point, from which the Chilian settlement of Punta Arenas derives its name.

There was no sign of the Nassau, then engaged in the survey of the Straits, which we had hoped to find in this anchorage; but from the Chilian officer, who speedily boarded us, we learned that she had sailed to the westward a day or two before our arrival, and was expected to return immediately. The results of the careful observations made by Mr. Cunningham, of the scenery and natural history of the Straits, have appeared while these pages were in preparation for the press; and it affords me pleasure to refer such as desire more scientific accounts of the botany and zoology, at least of Southern Patagonia, than it was in my power to obtain, to his work.

My own object in visiting Punta Arenas was to proceed thence to Santa Cruz with the Indians, or in whatever way might prove feasible; but, in truth, it was by no means clear to my mind how it was to be accomplished; it was, therefore,

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Quillota (parched corn meal and water), we resumed our route north. After leaving the lagoon, a scarcely perceptible slope ascended from the valley, and a more undulating course was traversed until we reached a small cañon, which after a gradual descent dipped down between walls a hundred feet high, sloping up at either hand, and finishing in a rounded summit leading to the high plain. 'Here,' said J'aria, 'there is no firing, and those *stupid* Indian women actually carry loads of it from the next stage.' But the event proved that the Indians were wiser than ourselves. Following this, we arrived at another cañon running at right angles, east and west, on one of the grass-covered sides of which we observed a couple of horses feeding in a hollow which looked more verdant than the rest of the ground, but the animals being caught and examined proved unsound and useless. In the bottom of the cañon there flowed a small but deep stream spreading into lagoons in places. We crossed this and encamped on the northern side, and found J'aria's words, as to no fuel to be found about this valley, verified, much to our discomfort. Towards evening we went out and shot some ducks, but having no fire to cook with, were content to turn in on meal and water. During the night the tent pole, having been first soaked with rain and then frozen, snapped in two, and down came the spread of wet canvas; and altogether we did not spend a very pleasant time.

Misfortunes never come single; at daylight no horses were to be seen, and we had to wait until near ten o'clock before they turned up. During this interval we burnt the tent pegs and some chips from the tent pole, and raised sufficient fire to make coffee. J'aria informed me that this cañon extends from the Cordillera to the sea, but runs in a tortuous manner, and we afterwards again struck either the main line or some cañon leading from it. Having scaled the precipitous banks, we headed towards a range of peaked hills, curiously resembling one another, and after passing down one or two more cañons, where we refreshed ourselves with the berries

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tolerably good order, to receive the present. There were undoubtedly some very tall men amongst them, but what struck me particularly was their splendid development of chest and arms. Although the wind was very sharp, many of them had their mantles thrown back in a careless way, leaving their naked chests exposed in the air, and appeared not the least incommoded. They readily recognised me for an Englishman, coming and examining me closely, and asking for tobacco with a broad grin on their faces, exposing a wonderfully clean and regular set of teeth. My gratifying their importunate requests for tobacco made Sam very jealous, and for some time he bothered me with remarks such as 'Me very cold, no got poncho,' 'Me no got knife, me no got "pellon"' (saddle-cloth), until, finding it useless to beg, he relapsed into sullen silence. A smoke of the pipe, however, brought him back to his usual cheerful temper, and as we galloped along he chanted an Indian song, which consisted of the words 'Ah ge lay loo, Ah ge lay loo,' expressed in various keys.

After a ride of some leagues in a rather more open but still undulating country, a break in the Pampas was reached. Hills of irregular and picturesque outlines, with labyrinthine valleys or ravines, not running in parallel order, but communicating with each other, occupied an extensive district, and though travelling was considerably more difficult, yet the change in the aspect of nature was grateful after the barren monotony of the plains.

We halted in an Indian encampment, situated in a valley underneath a peaked hill called 'Otiti,' where there were pools of fresh and salt water in close proximity. Amongst the incense and thorn bushes, which grow at intervals in these regions, we passed to-day another description of shrub with a thick rough bark, which is readily detached, and leaves a long rattail-like sort of twig. From the Rio Gallegos the soil had become generally of a yellower colour than on the south side of that river, although in the valleys and hollows

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dark peaty earth was generally to be found, and the surface of the Pampas had assumed a more desolate appearance, being strewn with small pebbles, and studded with bushes—generally of a thorny species. Round clumps of prickly thistles—which burn like tinder on applying a lighted match—and a few stray tufts of withered grass, only made more desolate the hungry barrenness of the deserts, over which the wind blew with cutting violence, yet they are the home of large herds of guanaco, ostriches, puma, and armadillo, though the latter were at this period comfortably hybernating.

Next morning no horses were visible, and as time went on till ten o'clock without any appearance we all began to suspect Indian treachery. Sam volunteered the remark that if they (the Indians) had played us such a trick, he would go and clear all their animals out the following evening. This threat there was fortunately no occasion for him to put into execution, as the troop proved only to have strayed into another valley. As we were now nearing Santa Cruz, which the last of the Indians were just leaving, having completed their trade and finished all the grog, we saw numerous columns of smoke, caused by their hunting parties. After passing the broken ground and reaching the high Pampa, Sam and myself rode on ahead, amusing ourselves by fruitlessly chasing guanaco or ostrich, but Sam's dexterity with the bolas was frustrated by his being mounted on a horse belonging to the expedition and unused to this work. Towards evening, after again passing numerous salt lagoons, we came to a descent of 800 or 400 feet leading to a valley containing a large salina, and halting, made our fire by the side of a spring, near which, Sam informed me, were the graves of two Indians, which he mentioned with the deepest respect and in an awe-stricken undertone.

Our signal smoke, which was as much to attract Indians as to give the direction of our route to Gallegos and J'aria, was soon responded to from the opposite hills on the northern

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pointed out to me in the Falklands, and numerous oyster shells and other marine shells occured in various localities. There are no streams, but frequent lagoons in the hollows, and surrounded by a luxuriant growth of incense bushes. The unbroken plains abound in round thistle, califate, and the curious shrub called 'ratstail,' from the appearance of its twigs when the thick bark is pulled off. When burned it emits a dense black resinous smoke. To the north the horizon is bounded by a lofty range of hills which form the barrier of the valley of the Rio Chico, about sixty miles distant. These northern hills abound with puma, some of which, killed in our hunts, were of unusual size, measuring fully six feet exclusive of the tail, which is generally half the length of the body. They are, of course, most numerous where the herds of guanaco and the ostriches abound; in the southern part of Patagonia their colour is more of a greyish-brown than that of the species found in the Argentine Provinces. These 'Leones,' as they are universally called in South America, always appeared to me to be the most cat-like of all the felidæ. They are very timid, always running from a man on horseback, and, by day at least, from a pedestrian; they run for a short distance in a series of long bounds, at great speed, but soon tire and stand at bay behind or in the midst of a bush, and sitting upon their haunches, spit and swear just like a monstrous tabby; sometimes endeavouring to scratch with their formidable claws, but rarely springing at the pursuer. Mr. Clarke on one occasion had his mantle torn off in this manner. At another time, when hunting in the vicinity of Santa Cruz, I observed from a distance Gonzalez hacking with his knife at a big incense bush, and on reaching the spot found him occupied in clearing away branches to allow him to knock a huge puma on the head with his bolas. He was dismounted and attended by his dogs, which bayed the animal. Still, had the puma not been a cur, he could doubtless have sprung out and killed or severely wounded the gaucho.

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The next day was got through by having a thorough 'wash' of my clothes, and cultivating a closer acquaintance with the Chilian Arica, from whom I obtained a dog in exchange for an old guanaco mantle. But as on the third day no signs of the return of Orkeke appeared, the inaction became insupportable, so after the departure on a hunting excursion of Tankelow and his son, Arica and myself determined to start in pursuit of Casimiro and his party. As Arica had no horse, it would be necessary for us to ride and tie; but even thus we could make quick travelling. Accordingly at two P.M. we started, much to the astonishment of the ladies, who protested that we were certain to lose our way or be killed by the pumas. One old lady, Orkeke's sister, after trying in vain to dissuade us, presented me with a slice of charqui, which with a few handfuls of coffee formed our stock of provisions. That day we did not get very far; but in the next march, as the track of the Indians was plain, we had made thirty miles by the time we halted, at nightfall, at a place where another valley from the northward joined that of the Rio Chico. Our charqui had barely sufficed for an evening meal, so this day we satisfied our appetites with the supply of the tuberous roots of a plant which grows in great quantities in most parts of Patagonia.

The plant, which in its growth resembles very closely the balsam bog of the Falkland Islands, and might be easily taken for it but for the absence of the gum, which perhaps was attributable to the quality of the soil or the season of the year, is easily recognisable by its mass of tiny green leaflets, and presents the appearance of a small hillock of earth crowned with delicate moss. By digging down into the heap, one large and several small tuberous roots are found, which when roasted in the ashes prove sufficiently palatable to hungry men.

We went to sleep in the open air, rolled up in our guanaco mantles, but awoke to find that a heavy fall of snow had covered everything a foot deep, and totally hidden all trail of

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routine of hunting, as we made our way slowly up the valley of the Rio Chico, which was still frozen over. The weather was cold, and occasional showers of snow accompanied the strong piercing westerly winds which blew every day. The valley sometimes opened out into wide grass-covered plains, dotted with incense-bushes, then rose again in huge bare ridge and furrow-like undulations. Occasionally there occurred patches of swampy ground with frozen lagoons, and here and there open springs, the resort of numerous waterfowl. The hills on the northern side appeared bare and rugged, rising abruptly out of irregular forms, while the southern heights were lower, and presented more of the steep declivities known as barrancas, interrupted at intervals by high rugged hills of basalt, often assuming the appearance of ruined castles, closing in at the bends of the winding river. To one of these—a remarkable hill under which we were encamped on August 23, about 120 miles from Santa Cruz—I gave the name of Sierra Ventana, from a window-like opening through its peak; the Indians called it Môwaish. (See Illustration.) In many places the bases of these hills were formed entirely of a description of lava, and one of the Chilians informed me that whilst passing over a ridge, he had observed several large masses of pure iron: this, however, I was inclined to disbelieve, as although farther up the country iron ore exists in large quantities, I only observed in this part a species of ore similar to that common at Drobak, in Norway.

On one occasion, while marching, we observed smoke in our rear, which was thought to be caused either by a messenger in search of us announcing the arrival of the schooner, or else by a party of the Southern Indians who had some idea of marching north. However, no scout was sent back to discover the truth, so we remained in ignorance. On the 26th we halted, and encamped by the side of the river in a broad opening of the valley; here there was a lagoon, not completely frozen, in which grew a description of flag, of

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137 262 which the root, or rather lower stem, is eaten by the Indians, and is succulent and juicy, with a pleasant taste. The boys and girls soon brought a large supply into the toldos. The 881 day after our arrival in this place, the attainment of the age of puberty of one of the girls was celebrated according to custom. Early in the morning the father of the child informed the cacique of the event, the cacique thereupon officially communicated the intelligence to the acting doctor or medicine-man, and a considerable shouting was set up, while the doctor adorned himself with white paint and was bled in 881 the forehead and arms with a sharp bodkin. The women 346 immediately set to work to sew a number of 'mandils' together. When the patchwork was finished, it was taken with pomp and ceremony by a band of young men, who marched round the poles—already fixed to form a temporary toldo—singing, whilst the women joined in with the most dismal incantations and howlings. After marching round several times, the covering was drawn over the poles, and lances were stuck in front, adorned with bells, streamers, and brass plates that shook and rattled in the breeze, the whole thing when erected presenting a very gay appearance (its Indian name literally meaning 'The pretty house'). The 881 girl was then placed in an inner part of the tent, where nobody was admitted. After this everybody mounted, and some were selected to bring up the horses, out of which certain mares and fillies were chosen, and brought up in front of the showy toldo, where they were knocked on the head by a ball—thus saving the blood (which was secured in [262] pots) to be cooked, being considered a great delicacy. It is a rule amongst the Indians that any one assisting to take off the hide of a slaughtered mare is entitled to a piece of meat, but the flesh was on this occasion distributed pretty equally all round. Whilst the meat was cooking, Casimiro, who was 881 ruler of the feast, sent a message for me to come to Crimé's 252 toldo, where I found him busy working at a saddle, in the construction of which he was, by the way, an adept. His

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526 speed of our horses to while away the interval; and when the women appeared, proceeded to the chase, over a pampa formed by a bend in the range of hills. During the hunt
136 we found the carcase of a guanaco, which had been killed by a puma, carefully covered up in grass and scrub. It was a fat animal, such as the puma always singles out, although I have read in some accounts that he follows the herds and picks up the weakly ones. That this is not the case was proved on various occasions, by finding the carcases left by these cats, which were always those of animals in good con-
133 dition. Early in the afternoon we arrived at the encampment, by the side of a small river, flowing in an easterly direction from the hills. The women, with the exception of one or two, were not present, and might be seen about two miles off,
137 grubbing up a description of potato which grew in the neighbouring hill side. The day was warm; and Orkeke invited me to go to the top of one of the hills to see if any smoke or signs of Indians were visible. We accordingly crossed the stream, and while riding along the northern bank I observed fish swimming lazily on the top of the water. After crossing a marshy patch of ground, we ascended the hills, and dismounting near a bank of blue earth, climbed on foot to the summit, which was composed of a description of quartz, with crystalline veins running through it. Scrambling up this formation, we arrived at the top, whence we had a beautiful view of the encampment and the green pasture bordering the stream. To the northward the view was rather shut in by hills rising to a considerable elevation. Just below us lay a valley, in which several guanaco and ostriches were taking their evening meal. We remained here for some time smoking and enjoying the face of nature generally, but could discern no smoke or signs of Indians. Orkeke remarked that the pasture had a fresher appearance lower down the course of the stream, and proposed that we should inspect it. We accordingly descended from our elevated position, mounted, and proceeded to the valley below; in our descent

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being lucky enough to kill a fat male ostrich, which was sit- [33
ting on a nest of twenty-four eggs. We investigated the grass, which was of good quality; and after an *al fresco* meal, in which we were joined by Tehang, returned to the toldos, where the women had just arrived with a considerable supply of potatoes. I again, on our way back, observed fish in the [36
stream, so, turning my horse adrift, proceeded to extract my hooks and line from the baggage under the charge of Mrs. Orkoke. After a little delay all was ready; a piece of meat supplied the place of fly as bait; and dropping it gently into the pool, I soon had a bite, and pulled out a fish about two pounds weight, of the perch class, similar to that called dorado in the River Plate. After half an hour's fishing I landed several others as large, and as it was nearly dark, returned to supper off fried fish and boiled potatoes.

I had no opportunity of seeing the plants which produced [37
these tubers, but they exactly resembled those I afterwards obtained in the northern country from a plant, the feathery fern-like leaf of which springs from a long slender stem. The following day we shifted camp down river, to the neigh- [39
bourhood of the green pasture, and found large quantities of the eggs of the upland geese, ducks, &c. In the neighbourhood one lonely tree grew by the side of the stream, although the banks were lined with driftwood, probably carried down by the wooded slopes of the Cordillera, ten miles farther west, during floods. This day, smoke having been distinctly seen to the northward, Hummums was despatched to ascertain whether it were a signal from the much-looked-for Northern Indians. Three days subsequently, about nine in [49
the evening, whilst I was lying dreaming of home, and had just—in dreamland—taken a glass of sherry, Orkoke woke me up with the intelligence that fires were to be seen to the north, which were no doubt caused by the 'chasqui' or messenger previously despatched. In about three hours' time —somewhere about midnight—Casimiro, Hummums, and another Indian rode into the camp, and our toldo was soon

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be seen a party of young men playing at ball, in another a 5/7
man breaking a colt, and down by the side of the stream
groups of girls bathing, or wandering in the swamps picking [17]
the wild spinach, which grew all along the margin of the
water in great quantities. One day I went on an excursion 252
with the children to pluck spinach and plunder the nests of
wild ducks and upland geese, from which we returned laden
with spoil, and in the evening a stew, *à la* Tehuelche, was
made with ostrich grease, spinach, and eggs, which combina-
tion was universally approved of. Another day we went
fishing, and after catching several with a hook and line,
voted it slow work, so contrived a net by sewing two ponchos
together, and waded into the stream dragging the shallow
parts, and, notwithstanding the duck-weed, which rather
impeded us, made several good hauls, the take consisting [14
of the perch-like fish and a black species of cat-fish: the 26]
Indians, however, except Casimiro, would not eat the fish,
and evidently regarded my enjoyment of them much as an
Englishman would at first view their appreciation of blood.
Another day we went on an expedition to dig up a species 252
of root somewhat resembling a parsnip, but although we
grubbed about for an hour our efforts were only scantily
rewarded by a few small roots, which were given to the
children. One roasted in the ashes, at Mrs. Orkoko's invita-
tion I tasted, and found it rather tasteless and insipid.

During our stay in this pleasant resting-place the weather 512
was bright and sunny, and on calm days warm, and the
absence of rain almost made it appear like summer; but
whenever the west wind blew, the piercing cold dispelled the
passing illusion. The long delay which was necessary to
recruit our horses, in anticipation of a campaign against
the young guanaco and the wild cattle, was most acceptable
to all the members of our party; and after the two preceding
months of quarrels, real and suspected dangers, and forced
marches, our present peaceable existence, though devoid of
adventure, was thoroughly enjoyable. An occasional hunting

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as to what there could possibly be in that place to write 203
about, as although the Tehuelche mind can comprehend writing letters to friends or officials, it by no means understands keeping a journal; and 'some untutored Indian' might probably, if suspicious that 'Faith he'll print it,' instead of waiting to cut up the book, anticipate all reviewers by cutting up the intended author himself.

On the 18th of November the camp at Henno was broken 133
up, and all marched a few leagues to the west, crossing successive rocky ridges running parallel to the Cordillera, and divided by well-watered valleys, and encamped near a valley watered by the same river, which between this place and Henno makes a considerable bend. This station was named 137
'Chiriq,' from a description of bush, with a leaf somewhat resembling that of the aloe, which grows abundantly on the banks of the stream. The wood of this shrub is soft and of little value, but burns well when dry. At this time neither flower nor fruit was visible, but it was described to me as bearing a berry resembling the currant. Since our departure from the wooded river Senguel, a description of cactus, or, as the Spaniards call it, tuna, bearing a tasteless fruit something like the ordinary prickly pear, had been met with occasionally, and found very troublesome, for as it grows close to the ground its spines are very apt to lame the horses if not carefully avoided in the chase. From Chiriq a large plain 133
appeared to extend for some leagues to the westward, bounded north and south by a wooded range of hills, and extending apparently to the bases of the lofty snow-covered peaks of the Cordillera, which appeared to form a complete barrier.

During our stay here an incident occurred which led to 53
the collection and comparison of the traditions concerning the hidden or enchanted city which still are current and believed among the Indians and Chilotes.

One day while hunting we were startled by a loud report, as of the discharge of a cannon, and looking to the west saw a black cloud of smoke hanging above the peaks of the Cor-

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started off; so, as my mantle was fast losing its beautiful appearance, I put compunction on one side, and shortly killed them with a blow on the head. On arriving at the fire where some of the Indians were collected eating ostriches, I was proceeding to take the skins off, when Tankelow, who presided, stopped me, saying that we would skin them in the toldos, where the blood would be a treat to the women and children. We accordingly reserved the luxury, and after a feed crossed a small stream and piece of marsh, beyond which lay the encampment, where the women soon verified Tankelow's words. Though the flesh of the young guanaco is rather tasteless and soft, the blood has a sweeter taste than that of the adult. The rennet, or milk, which is found curdled into a sort of cheese in the intestines, is also eaten with gusto. The most laborious part of young guanaco hunting consists in taking off the skin, which, after the necessary incisions have been made with a knife, has to be taken off by hand, the thumb being used to separate the hide from the body. The calves, when three days old, run at about the speed of a horse's hand-gallop, but sometimes give longer chases. The Indian plan is to kill them with a blow on the head from a ball, and then pass on to another, and so on, afterwards returning to collect them in a heap and skin them. After the hide is taken off it is necessary to expose it to the air for a few minutes before folding it up, otherwise it is liable to get heated, and will tear easily in the subsequent processes. We hunted in the neighbourhood of Jeroshaik, or 'Bad Hill,' several times, with varying success, sometimes proceeding up into the wooded hills, where the timber in some places grew in clumps, as if planted by the hand of man; in others filled up the rocky dells, until the main forests were reached, which appeared to extend far into the Cordillera. Most of the trees were of a species of beech, on which were many small edible fungi, some of which we gathered for use; and traces of red deer were frequently seen, and a few were chased by the Indians, but owing to the

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[136] thickness of the wood they escaped. Some of the Indians
137 took the opportunity to cut fresh poles for the toldos. The sight of woods and trees was so refreshing that I spent several days consecutively among them, very often alone, or with one companion. Nobody, except a sailor after months on the sea, can imagine the pleasure of wandering under trees to one who had passed so long a time in the barren and monotonous plains. The weather, however, still continued wet and inclement. On the 5th of December,
202 some of us wandering on the heights above, made out smoke to the N.E., and Campan went off at speed on horseback to reconnoitre. He returned towards nightfall very drunk, and riding straight to our toldo, proclaimed that El Sourdo, the Indian left behind in Santa Cruz, had arrived at a place close to us, bringing grog in two small barrels, and letters for me: when he had delivered his news, he, with some difficulty, dismounted without coming on his head; then produced a bottle half full of rum from under his mantle, which he dispensed to the attendant company.

574 Our toldo was soon crowded, and it was proposed that on the following day we should march and meet the visitor, all being eager for a drink. Accordingly, on the morrow we started, in a storm of sleet and rain, and prepared to hunt *en route*. While hunting, just after Jackechan and myself had killed an ostrich, the former perceived a single toldo, which he knew must be El Sourdo's, so we galloped towards it, accompanied by two other Indians, and were received with open arms by El Sourdo and his two wives,
574 Jackechan being a very old friend. We were made to sit
273 down, and the olla, or boiling-pot, was brought out by the two wives, who acted as Hebes by producing the rum, with which our host filled the pot, and dispensed the liquor in a pannikin. One of the wives then produced my letters, which proved to be from Mr. Clarke and Don Luiz P. B., the schooner having arrived on October 5, all safe. El Sourdo then gave me all the news verbatim—how a fight had taken

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sacrifice to the Deity at a certain time of the year, I never saw anything of it. Whenever this sort of sacrificial feast took place, there was always a special occasion for it—either a death, or a child hurt, or some escape from danger, when the animals are killed as a thankoffering. Rather tired of remaining so long in one place, on the 12th we marched due north across the plain, which was called 'Gisk,' and encamped under a hill covered with trees, and the sides furrowed with small gullies, densely filled with vegetation and shrubs of two or three species. Here there were plants of the description of potatoes before mentioned, but growing very deep in such unfavourable ground that few were extracted. On the hill sides a plant bearing a yellow flower grew in abundance, the leaf of which, the Chilians informed me, was an excellent remedy for wounds and bruises, and much used in Chili. Four days' hunting took place here, at the end of which Orkeke, who had heard some story that the Pampas had been stealing a march by hunting at night, and was rather disgusted at his continual ill-success, proposed that we should separate, and, in company with the toldos of Tchang, go westward to a plain below the higher mountains, which he stated to be abounding in guanaco. He also proposed a trip into the Cordillera in search of wild cattle. This plan was eagerly approved, as I anticipated persuading him, if possible, to penetrate to the Chilian shores of the Pacific. We accordingly set out on our travels, but had not gone far before a frightful storm of wind, sleet, and rain set in, which wetted us all completely. We huddled for shelter under a bush for some time, but as it continued there was nothing for it but to push on, and about three P.M. the weather cleared up; we then entered a glen with a wooded stream running down it, expanding higher up into an open plain. A short distance up the valley the intended camping-ground lay, so a small circle was made, in which some ostriches and guanaco were killed. We then adjourned across the river under the trees, and soon had a roaring fire blazing, by the side of

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133 remedy. Whilst the women were pitching toldos, the men, eight in number, started to hunt again. Riding to the west, where the plain was still open, we came upon another of the huge basins previously described, on the western side of which, beyond a lagoon stocked with waterfowl, flowed a broad winding stream fringed with trees. At a short dis-
133 tance from the other side of the stream open glades extended
137 for the space of perhaps a mile to the verge of the interminable forests, rising high up on the lofty sides of mountains, some of whose summits were still partially snow-clad. To the south were two or three round detached hummocks, hardly deserving the name of hills, crowned with trees. In the foreground were immense herds of guanaco, and on the northern side frowned a high range of arid-looking hills, forming a great contrast to the deliciously-refreshing green aspect of the other points of view. Whilst waiting concealed behind a bush for the coming herd, which had been cunningly encircled by Tchang and another Indian, and were to be driven in our direction, we gazed long at the beautiful view before us, and Orkeke pointed out a mountain some distance to the north, underneath which, he said, was the entrance to the scene of our future campaign against the wild cattle. Towards evening we returned to the toldos, pretty well loaded with skins. On another occasion, when hunting, we made a circle, finishing off in the wooded district near the banks of the river. On our return we hunted over a park-like country, with alternate open glades and woods. Here we killed a doe red deer and a large description
[136] of fox, apparently identical with the Falkland Island species (Lupus antarcticus). In the vicinity of the woods, the velvety sward was carpeted with the wild strawberry plants, which, however, were only in bloom. On this occasion our enjoyment was marred by one of the party getting a severe fall, which laid him up for a day or two. Before we reached the toldos rain set in heavily, which during the night turned to snow, and the morning sun shone on a white landscape.

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During our stay the women went to the woods to cut fresh poles for the toldos, and the men brought back from the wooded country a description of fungus, which, when dried, forms an excellent tinder, of considerable value amongst the Indians, as there are only a few spots where it is to be obtained. After some days spent in this pleasant neighbourhood, as the supply of guanaco was failing, we marched over the barren range of hills, and passing a lagoon of considerable extent below the hills, encamped on the other side of them, by the side of a smaller one, in a place called 'Togomenykaik.'

During the hunt I had singled out a guanaco, and was in full chase across the upper pampa, which was covered with stunted bushes and tufts of grass, when the quarry suddenly disappeared, as if the earth had swallowed him. The next moment my horse halted in mid-gallop, with its fore feet on the edge of a precipitous descent which shelved away without any warning. Below was a long beautiful glen, with a pool of water glistening among the trees which filled it, but did not rear their topmost boughs above the level of the pampa. Here the guanaco had taken refuge, and as the descent was impracticable for a horse, I could only gaze longingly down into the fairy-like scene, and turn away to join the circle, remembering that it was only too easy to lose oneself by delay. Of this an instance occurred the same day, for one of the Chilians did not appear at the fireside when the hunting was completed. At first no heed was bestowed on him, as it was natural to suppose that he had chased a herd of guanaco to some distance, and was detained taking off the skins; but when at sunset he was still missing, some dry grass was fired, for the purpose of directing him to our camp. The following morning he had not appeared when we started to hunt, myself going as pointsman with Orkeke. We galloped for some distance over the plain, and halted in a hollow, where we came on six young skunks outside their parental burrow, into which they quickly vanished on our

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dismounting; but as their burrows do not penetrate far, Orkeke soon grubbed out a couple. As they were too small to kill for the value of their skins, and too much trouble to carry home as pets for the children, we set them free again, and I proceeded, leaving Orkeke to pursue his way slowly. A slight rise brought me in front of a rocky hill, on the other side of which was a river with wooded banks, across the valley of which river lay my route. I at first considered it to be the same as that seen in the previous encampment, but on reflection it was plainly another, this flowing north-east, whilst the other took a south-west course. Our hunt progressed very fairly. On closing the circle, one of the Chilians, who was running a guanaco with me, and not expert in the use of the bolas, entangled his horse and himself instead of the chase, which lost him his spoils, and caused much merriment amongst the remainder of the party; although I may as well state here that when a horse gets a ball round his legs or under his tail, it is not much of a joking matter for the rider. On our way back to camp, halting by a spring, we found large quantities of wild celery; nettles were also common—the real old English white-flowering one being prevalent. Although my bare legs got considerably stung, I forgot to swear in Tehuelche, and forgave the plant for old acquaintance sake. At the toldos we found the Chilian, who had arrived recently, having run a herd some distance and lost his way, but had been safely directed by our signal fires. In the afternoon some of the party were occupied in breaking their horses, while others were sitting at home lazily watching the performance. Conde's step-father, generally known as 'Paliki,' had a three-year-old iron-grey, with a white star, and a very fine animal, tied up ready to be mounted for the first time. Paliki entered our toldo to borrow my cincta, or girth, and chaffed me, asking if I would venture to 'domar' him. Orkeke seconded the proposal, and accordingly, having stripped off mantle and boots, I proceeded to take the lazo and reins and mount. The in-

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peruse my library, namely, half of the delightful 'Elsie Venner,' which Crimè had picked up on board some ship to serve as wadding for his guns, and sold to me for a little powder. To enable the reader to follow our somewhat devious course and the intricacies of these hills and frequent rivers, the sketch map at page 164 will be found useful; it does not pretend to be exact, but gives a very fair idea of the line of country traversed, and of our migrations between Henne and Teckel.

On the 23rd, Indians having been seen to the north and guanaco hunting proving a failure, Orkeke, to my great delight, proposed a visit to the wild-cattle country. The camp was accordingly struck, and following more or less the valley of the river, which flowed after one turn nearly due east, we shortly came out into an open plain running up between the mountains, at the head of which we encamped by some tall beeches on the banks of the stream. The whole of the latter part of the plain traversed was literally carpeted with strawberry plants all in blossom, the soil being of a dark peaty nature. Young ostriches were now numerous, and every hunt some were captured, and formed a welcome addition to our dinner. The children had several alive as pets, which they used to let loose and then catch with miniature bolas, generally ending in killing them. Our programme was to leave all the women, toldos, and other encumbrances in this spot, named 'Weekel,' or Chaykash—a regular station, and which Hinchel's party had occupied a few weeks previously—and proceed ourselves into the interior in search of cattle. The following morning at daylight horses were caught and saddled, and, after receiving the good wishes of the women, who adjured us to bring back plenty of fat beef, we started off just as the sun was rising behind the hills to the eastward. The air was most invigorating, and we trotted along for some distance up a slightly irregular and sandy slope, halting after an hour or two by the side of a deliciously clear brook, flowing east,

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feet in height, whence we looked down on a broad plain in the form of a triangle, bounded by the river flowing through the ravine on the north side, and on the southern by another coming from the south, which two streams united in one large river at the western apex, at a distance of about perhaps a league. Above and around, on all sides excepting to the west and the ravines through which the rivers flowed, rose the unbroken wall of the lofty mountains of the Cordillera, many of their peaks snow-clad. No sound was to be heard except the rushing of the river in the ravine, and no animal life to be seen except a condor or two floating high above us in the clear sky. The scene was sublime, and I viewed it in silence for some minutes, till the pipe, being handed to me, dispelled all nascent poetic tendencies. The Indians remained silent and looked disgusted, as a herd of cattle had been expected to be viewed on the plain below. We descended to the flats, and crossed the river, on the banks of which 'Paja' or Pampa-grass grew in abundance, as well as the bamboo-like canes from which Araucanian Indians make their lance shafts, and a plant called by the Chilians 'Talka,' the stalk of which, resembling rhubarb, is refreshing and juicy. On the northern edges and slope of the ravine behind us towered graceful pines sixty feet high, which, though an impassable barrier of rock prevented close inspection, appeared to be a species of Araucaria; the bark was imbricated and the stems rose bare of branches for two-thirds of their height, like those figured by M. Gay. Many had been carried down by landslips, and lay tossed and entangled on the sides of the ravine. The increase of temperature after [132] passing the watershed was sensibly great, amounting to from seven to ten degrees, and the vegetation far more luxuriant, the plants presenting many new forms unknown at the eastern side. After leaving the plain and crossing the shallow stream, we left our mantles, and girthed up near a tree in a thicket festooned with a beautiful creeper, having a bell-shaped flower of violet radiated with brown. The

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133 variety of flowers made an Eden of this lovely spot: climbing
● 137 clusters of sweet-peas, vetches, and rich golden flowers re-
224 sembling gorgeous marigolds, and many another blossom, filled the air with perfume and delighted the eye with their beauty. Proceeding still westward we entered a valley with alternate clumps of trees and green pastures, and after riding about a mile I espied from a ridge on one side of the valley two bulls on the other side, just clear of the thick
224 woods bordering the ascent of the mountains. The word was passed in whispers to the cacique, and a halt being called under cover of some bushes, a plan of attack was arranged in the following manner. Two men were sent round to endeavour to drive the animals to a clearing where it would be possible to use the lazo, the remainder of the party proceeding down towards the open ground with lazos, ready to chase if the bulls should come that way. For a few minutes we remained stationary, picking the strawberries, which in this spot were ripe, although the plants previously met with were only in flower. At the end of five minutes spent in anxiously hoping that our plan would prove successful, a yell from the other side put us on the alert, and we had the gratification to see one of the animals coming straight towards our cover. Alas! just as we were preparing to dash out, he turned on the edge of the plain, and after charging furiously at his pursuers dashed into a thicket, where he stood at bay. We immediately closed round him, and dismounting, I advanced on foot to try and bring him down with the revolver; just as I had got within half a dozen paces of him, and behind a bush was quietly taking aim at his shoulder, the Indians, eager for beef, and safe on their horses at a considerable distance off, shouted, 'Nearer! nearer!' I accordingly stepped from my cover, but had hardly moved a pace forward when my spur caught in a root: at the same moment 'El Toro' charged. Entangled with the root, I could not jump on one side as he came on; so when within a yard I fired a shot in his face, hoping to

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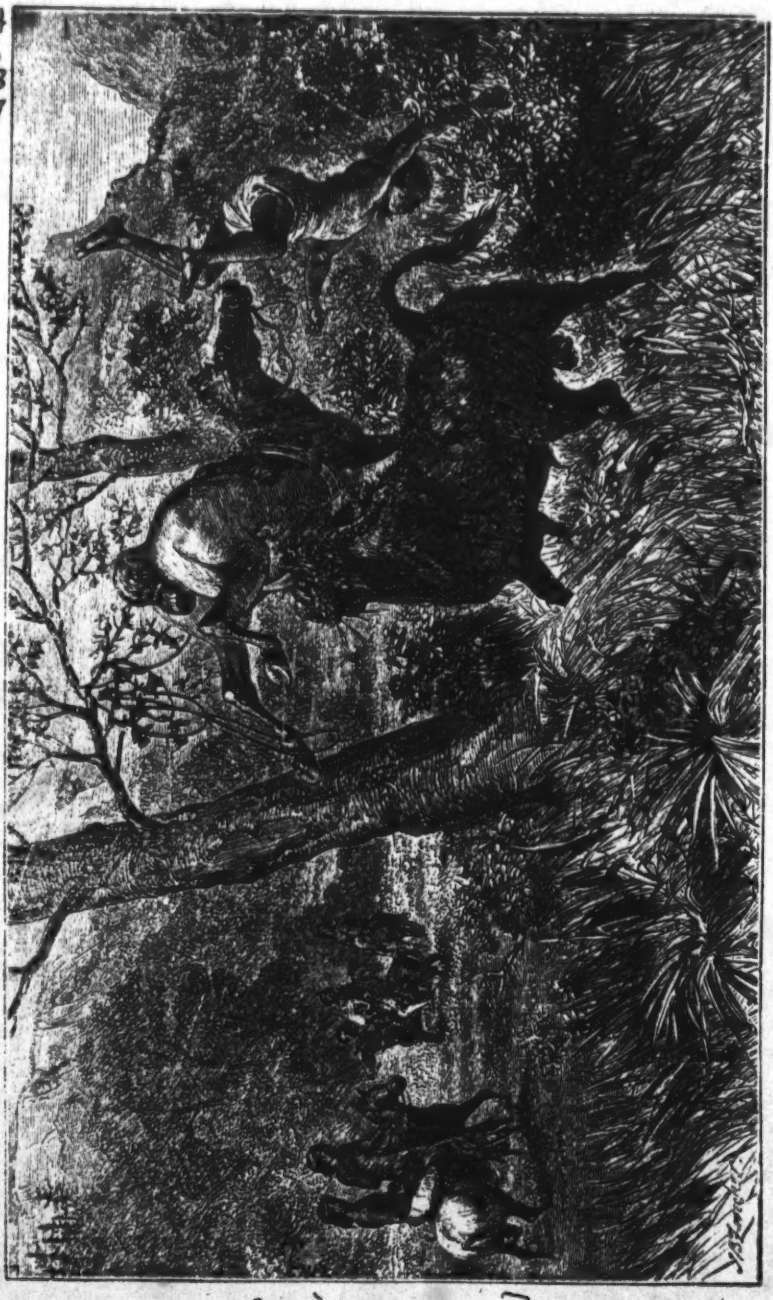

A WILD BULL IN THE CORDILLERA.

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[facing p. 159]

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and one chased; but he, although balled by Orkeke, contrived to slip the bolas, and escaping to cover stood to bay, where he was left master of the field. This bull would have been taken had the other Indians showed any degree of alacrity when Orkeke balled him; but they were dispirited by the previous failure. As evening was coming on I noticed a cormorant on the river: this and the increase of temperature led me to believe that had we penetrated a few miles farther west we should have reached the shores of the Pacific. Pursuing our track homewards, after the second unsuccessful engagement, we managed to pass the thick forest before dark, and decending to the eastern valley saw numerous cows and bulls at intervals. A short time after dark we encamped for the night under the shelter of some trees near to the head-waters of the western river, and after a pipe—by way of supper—wrapping ourselves in our mantles were soon fast asleep. At daylight we mounted and continued our journey, arriving about two P.M. pretty considerably hungry, having eaten nothing barring strawberries and talka, and a few unripe currants, since our last evening in the toldos. The women were naturally disappointed at our ili-luck, but uttered no complaints or reproaches, and hastened to pound some charqui for our refreshment. Next day, all except myself and my companion in the overthrow, who complained of headache, went out hunting and returned at night with young guanaco, and an ostrich or two. Some of the women had seen cattle near the encampment, and Orkeke informed me that in former years they used to occupy the plains below us in large herds, but that the Indians had driven them into the interior by excessive hunting: he also stated that on one occasion he spent some months in this spot, and caught and tamed a considerable number. His accurate knowledge of the country made his statement credible, and he also showed me a sort of corral that had been made to enclose the wild animals. For my own part, the name of the Cordillera recalls the most hungry

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Christmas time of my life: to parody the 'Ancient Mariner,' it was 'Cattle, cattle everywhere, and never a bit of beef.' The following day was spent in the toldos, and some of the Indians were desirous, or pretended to be, of going once more in search of cattle. Orkeke would not hear of it, so on the 28th we marched, following the course of the river in a more or less north-east direction. The weather was beautiful, and after leaving the plain we rode along the winding valley, now and then starting a herd of guanaco or a solitary ostrich. Towards evening we encamped on the banks of the river, and the women, after pitching the toldos, employed themselves in grubbing up potatoes. This day we saw smoke to the north, caused by the hunting-parties of the other Indians, and also some at a greater distance, which Orkeke said was that of the Araucanian Indians, whom it was expected that we should shortly meet with.

On the 29th we were preparing to march, and while the women were engaged in lading the horses some of us were picking the berries of the 'Califata,' or barberry (Berberis buccifolia), or looking for strawberries, when a boy, from a party of other Indians occupying the toldos near at hand, rode up as if despatched as a chasqui, and stated that his party had communicated with the Araucanians, amongst whom there had been a row in a drinking bout, resulting in the death of the cacique. This story was fully believed, and Orkeke was rather perplexed, as perhaps the new cacique might not be friendly disposed towards the Tehuelches. Without hunting, we rode quietly down to the next encampment, where the two strange toldos had already arrived. On our near approach one of the Indians came to meet us, and whilst discussing a pipe, after the observance of the usual ceremonial prescribed by etiquette (as we had not seen the man before), we asked him about the row amongst the Araucanos, which turned out to be all a hoax on the part of the promising youth who had visited us. After a while we

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After a good diner we adjourned to see the races, a great match being on between the two tribes. The course was about four miles; and the race resulted in a victory for the Tehuelches. Both sides had backed their favourites heavily; and as on this occasion the ladies took a prominent share in the betting, the Tehuelches were in great glee, having won from the fair Araucanians many valuable mandils and lechus. In the evening a grand feast took place, with a mandil tent and dance.

Near this place grew a quantity of the wild potatoes, and the women used to start early in the morning and come back towards evening with their horses loaded. The tubers were the largest I had seen, and closely resembled the sweet potato in flavour. The usual way of cooking them was boiling in a pot, a sod of earth being placed over all to keep the steam in.

We made a stay of eight days in Esgel-kaik, amusing ourselves by racing, visiting the Araucanos, and passing a very pleasant time, the only drawback being the illness of Crimè, who grew gradually worse.

The day before our departure, Jackechan and El Sourdo intimated that, as they feared a disturbance, and wished to keep clear of any fight, they would not accompany us to Las Manzanas, but purposed to proceed in the direction of Chupat, and send in a messenger to the Welsh colony. So I at once took the opportunity of forwarding a letter to Mr. Lewis Jones, requesting certain supplies of yerba, tobacco, and sugar.

On February 5th the whole camp broke up, Jackechan and two toldos marching to the north-east, and the remainder, who now formed an extensive train, marching almost due north. Before leaving, Jackechan sent one of his wives and his youngest son, who was remarkably attached to me, to our toldo, to be under the charge of her father, Kai Chileno. El Sourdo had pressed me to go with their small party, and for some time I wavered, but thought it best to stick to Casimiro, and pay a visit to Cheoeque, and the much-praised

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We remained some days in Diplaik, during which several races were run, resulting on this occasion in favour of the horses of the Araucanians, who won many horses and mares from their neighbours.

The international sports were diversified by a cock fight between Orkeke's bird, and one belonging to an Araucanian. My assistance was requested to sharpen the spurs, and my friends were much astonished at my indignant refusal to have anything to do with such a proceeding. The Araucanian owner of the cock had also a hen which, during the march, sat upon a clutch of eggs and successfully reared her brood of six chickens, the hen, nest, and all being carefully transported on horseback, and Dame Partlet seeming quite as much at home in the saddle as any Indian mother with her nursling carried in the cradle behind her.

In the dry lagoons on the western side of the valley the women, and indeed sometimes the men, were frequently engaged in grubbing up an edible root which grew in large quantities. The leaf of the plant is very minute, and the root, which is found about a foot below the surface, varies in length from one to three inches: it is quite white, and about a quarter of an inch in diameter; when raw its taste resembles that of a chestnut, but is rather sweeter. The Indians boil it and drink the water, which is very sweet. During the last two days of our stay we subsisted entirely on this food and fish caught in the stream, as meat was not obtainable. Some of the Tehuelches were here induced for the first time to taste the fish on which Casimiro, Meña, and myself were regaling, and some of them took a great liking to it, and borrowing my lines and hooks were soon sitting on the bank waiting patiently for a bite. They caught several, and towards evening returned with my lines and a share of the fish for us, which we did not require. As I had plenty of hooks, these ingenious savages soon made lines for themselves out of twisted ostrich sinews, and may, for all I know, at the present time be occupied in fishing. The fact that none of these

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Tehuelche friends. The gloriously warm weather, which, for a wonder, continued during our stay at Lilly-haik, as this station was named, rendered our residence there most enjoyable, and we revelled in the simple pleasures of the woods; sometimes three or four of us would go across the brook, and traversing a plain occupied by the horses and cattle, search for strawberries amongst the ravines of the neighbouring mountains, or climb the tall trees and gather the yellow insipid fungus adhering to the branches, or lie down amongst the wild violets and enjoy the *dolce far niente*. These Indian children of nature showed themselves as thoroughly able to appreciate the idleness of gathering fruit and flowers and roaming in the woods as school children on a holiday ramble. On one occasion Casimiro and several others proceeded in search of wood wherewith to construct saddles, and we felled several fine trees, selecting and cutting off suitable pieces of timber. It was hard work with blunt axes, but Indians are indefatigable when they once commence a task. After my spell at the axe I wandered off with a companion into the thicker forest in search of fungus to make tinder. Of this we found little, but thirst soon made us seek for water, and discover a delicious ice-cold rivulet, embowered with currant bushes bearing ripe fruit. Here we remained a short time smoking and picking currants, recumbent on the mossy turf, till a shout in the distance warned us that our companions were returning. On our way home we killed one of the flat toad-like lizards which the Indians regard as devilish; we also caught a young skunk, which Casimiro wished to keep as a pet for the children, but at my instance let it go and enjoy the delights of freedom. 'Fancy a tame skunk!' some may exclaim; but in Hinchel's toldo there were two skunks which, perfectly tame and as playful as kittens, ran about everywhere, never using their offensive powers, and sometimes getting lost for an hour or two caused a dreadful outcry to be raised by the children until they were found.

The hill slopes were a garden of calceolarias, alyssum, tiny

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Araucanians SG4

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137 wild geraniums, and other flowers unknown to me. Amongst them were two magnificent creepers, one resembling a vine, with rich violet trumpet-shaped flowers, and another displaying gorgeous circular orange blossoms, with black lines radiating, like the spokes of a wheel, from the centre. I looked in vain for seeds, but there were none mature, so contented myself with plucking a flower, which was subsequently lost with other specimens.

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567 A disagreeable incident here gave me an opportunity of observing the disposition of the Araucanians to enslave and illtreat any unhappy 'Cristiano' that they can either kidnap or purchase. One of the Chilians, after more than once removing from one Tehuelche toldo to another, listened to the delusive promises of an Araucanian, and deserted his old protectors rather than masters. He soon found that he had exchanged an easy berth for real slavery. One day he besought me to interfere to protect him from the cruelty of his master, who was urging him with his whip to continue his labour of wood-felling. He complained that he was worked all day, and scantily fed, and obliged to sleep outside the toldo; very different from his life amongst the Patagonians, when food, shelter, and a horse to ride were always his lot. At my intercession Quintuhual took him into his service to protect him, for no Tehuelche would receive him; but he was afterwards reported to have been killed by his quondam master, as a punishment for his desertion.

T A
525 During our stay great gambling with cards was carried on amongst some of the party; and Casimiro and Hinchel worked most assiduously constructing saddles, which when finished they were in as great haste to gamble away. A wedding also varied the proceedings in this place; and another little incident, in the shape of a separation by mutual consent of an Araucanian husband and Tehuelche wife, gave the old ladies subject for gossip; but a reconciliation was soon after effected.

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On the 16th of February we left Lilly-haik, and bid[36] adieu to the pleasant river and the sylvan delights of this Paradise, as it seemed to us, with its flowery shades. As we ascended the northern declivity of the high ground bounding the valley, I halted to take a farewell look; and nowhere has a more beautiful scene presented itself to my gaze. The valley narrowed as it curved to the west, and at its head, through a gigantic cleft, the perpendicular walls of which rose several hundred feet, the waters of the river issued from their mountain cradle. So deep was the gloom of this gorge, that it was impenetrable to even Indian eyes, and the river seemed to flow into the sunlight out of unknown darkness. Above, on either hand, the precipitous cliffs sloped upwards into high mountains clothed with a rich mantle of the dark green, cedar-like foliage of the beech forests; and between[37] their summits might be discerned the dazzling peaks of far-distant loftier mountains crowned with perpetual snow.

Turning our backs upon this lovely scene, we crossed a remarkable succession of barren and stony terraces or benches of curiously irregular formation, the terraces running in different directions, and presenting no parallel lines to indicate any uniform action of water; the irregular slopes and level surfaces resembling a complication of gigantic steps. We at length descended to a plain bordering a river, which all the Indians agreed in declaring to be the main branch of the Chupat. The banks on the southern side were remarkable for being fringed with a species of pampas grass, while on the northern side grew a few trees, near which the toldos were pitched.

The river was about forty yards in width, and easily fordable in most places, although there were deep reaches where a horse had to swim. The foremost party of the hunters crossed first, and some, either not knowing or careless of the fords, enjoyed a bathe, swimming alongside their horses. By eventide all our party, women and baggage, had arrived. A few days' halt was occasioned in this place,

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Starting thence on March 3, and travelling always north-
648 wards over the barren upper pampas with scarcely a shrub on them, the wall-like Cordilleras rising on the west, and ranges of hills bounding the view to the east, about two P.M. we arrived at a marshy plain: there, as we were halting to make a fire, a cloud of smoke rose suddenly from the opposite side, indicating the near approach of the chasqui sent to Las Manzanas. Half a dozen of us were immediately despatched to verify the supposition, and, leaving our dinner for a future occasion, raced across the valley at full speed, the Indians firmly believing that the messengers would bring liquor with them, and every one being ambitious of the first drink. We at length made them out, and perceiving us in return they halted and dismounted by a small hillock, where we shortly joined them, Casimiro following sedately, as became so grand a personage. The Indians were disappointed as to the advent of liquor, the messengers having brought
● [37] nothing with them except a few apples, some of which, distributed to us, proved to be very juicy and refreshing, equalling any European apple. The only answer to our letter was a verbal message to the effect that we should be welcome at Las Manzanas, and that Chanequo would collect a force to meet us, all his people being at present busy in
[37] the mountains gathering the harvest of apples and pihones; he also stated that he had received late news from Patagones, one Mariano Linares, brother of the head chief of the tame Indians in that settlement, being at present a visitor at Las Manzanas. Casimiro was rather irritated at not receiving a written answer, but on my pointing out that it was just possible Chanequo did not own a secretary in his suite, the chief was somewhat pacified, although his dignity was rather hurt, and he recurred again and again to the subject.

784 On our way to the toldos,—which, during the intervals of our hearing the news, roasting apples, &c., had been pitched, —Casimiro pointed out to me the scene of a former fight in which a chief and several Indians had been killed. It was a very desirable place for encampment, but owing to these

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was late and disturbances might occur, he considered it would be better not to allow any liquor to be sold until the following day, when all arms might be stowed in a safe place, and anybody who felt disposed to get drunk might do so with comfort. To this Casimiro agreed, further assuring me, in the most positive manner, that he would keep sober. Whilst we were sitting by the fireside, a bird, exactly resembling our well-known nightjar, flew over our heads, uttering its peculiar grating cry; the Indians all looked startled, asserting that it was a sign of ill luck, and that whenever this bird croaked in the vicinity of an assembly of people some one was sure to fall sick or die. Their superstitious belief in the ill-omened bird received a confirmation, for in the middle of the night, while asleep by the fire, I was roused by Gravial, who, shaking my arm and shouting 'Let us go, let us go!' rushed away from the firelight into the dark night. His father and myself followed him, and after a long chase caught and, with difficulty, mastered him. He was raving mad, struggling violently, and vociferating incoherent nonsense. When the fit had passed off, his exhaustion and prostration were so great that all thought he would die; but he recovered for the time.

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At break of day we were all on the alert; and as the evening previously we had been too tired and hungry to observe the scenery, I proceeded to reconnoitre the locality generally. To my great surprise, the head-quarters of Chocorpe consisted but of four tolderia, belonging to the chief and his brother-in-law, the men who had received us having come from distant residences unaccompanied by their wives, and living, like ourselves, in the open air. The scene of the encampment was a valley running east and west, the western end being apparently shut in by some high mountains, spurs of the Cordillera. A good stream watered this valley, which was everywhere more or less wooded: away to the north-west, about four miles distant, the apple-groves might be seen; these trees had, however, already been

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stripped of fruit, and it was necessary to proceed much further to the north to procure any; but an expedition to visit that district and to get fruit, planned by Orkeke, Hinchel, myself, and others, proved impracticable. Beyond the apple-groves the place was also pointed out where the arenarias grow, from which the pifiones are gathered, just below the snow-clad mountains we had viewed from the ridge above the Rio Limay, and about thirty miles distant.

A 231 422 In our valley the pasture was rather scanty, although there appeared to be sufficient for the three flocks of small sheep, each owned by one of Chocoque's wives, to get into A good condition; but sheep will feed anywhere. Immediately [417] behind the toldos was situated a corral for enclosing cattle, none of which, however, were visible, having, probably, been driven off to some secluded valley near at hand, to avoid giving our people a chance of helping themselves. Round T A this corral were grouped the Indians of Chocoque's tribe, 361 and the Picunches with fruit, &c., to barter; and between the corral and the river lay the bivouac of the Tehuelches; our fireside being denoted by Casimiro's flag, the colours of the Argentine Confederation. Up and down the valley, and A even about the neighbouring hills, were scattered our horses. 362 Proceeding to inspect the toldos, at which I had given but a cursory glance the night before, I found that they were all fixed dwellings; that is to say, not put together so as to be moved in marches, like those of the Patagonians. They were, indeed, constructed in the same manner, but the poles were much shorter, and the whole edifice more resembled a house.

Chocoque's toldo was quite sixteen feet high, and able to accommodate forty men; while three five of huge billets of wood burned in the front part. It was closed in completely, except a doorway in the corner with a skin curtain by way of door; and along the front ran a species of verandah, composed of interwoven branches, forming a pleasant canopy, under the shade of which we sat and

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137 We remained some days in this place, and whilst hunting in the surrounding country (where hares abounded), we observed a new description of spinous shrub with small ovate leaves and yellow flowers, resembling holly, and growing to about two feet in height. Casimiro and myself agreed to try
757 whether the leaves might not be medicinal, so a quantity were bruised and boiled: the infusion proved exceedingly bitter, reminding me of quinine, and acted as an admirable sudorific, being administered to the invalids with great success. In
133 one of our excursions we had crossed the hills and descended on a high elevated plain, concluding our hunt near a swelling eminence exactly resembling a huge 'barrow' thickly overgrown with shrubs, from which what appeared to be a saline was espied, to our great delight. Hinchel and myself being alone, and having a fat ostrich to discuss for dinner, determined to enjoy our meal by its shore, first testing the quality of the salt, a luxury which we had long been destitute of. Dismounting, we proceeded to investigate it; but to our great disappointment, after walking over every part of
[136] it, and digging down with knives a foot below the surface, the supposed salt proved to be bitter and nauseous nitrate of soda.
132 After quitting the vicinity of the Cordillera the weather had every day become warmer, and the frosts at night much lighter: indeed whilst in Telek some warm days were experienced, although the winter season was fast approaching.
137 Near this encampment the small edible root previously described as growing in the dried-up lagoons was found in abundance, and was collected by the women and children.
[134] Cavies were plentiful in the hollows and valleys in the neighbouring hills, and even close to the encampment, but the chase of other game proved difficult, the hill sides being so strewn with stones as to render galloping a horse a
777 certainty of laming him. In this neighbourhood Hinchel pointed out a detached pinnacle of rock, much resembling that noticed at Geylum, and according to custom invoked a
135 blessing from the guardian spirit; and then he informed me

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152 One misery, starvation, had certainly been avoided by the abundance of horse-flesh, but it can easily be imagined that we could have borne hunger better. We had endured cold, and hunger, and fatigue, as well as danger, before, but nothing has left so indelible an impression of a thoroughly bad time as that march from Geylum to Margensho.

000 At last Casimiro issued orders to march, and with two or three more of us started in advance. While waiting under the shelter of a mass of rocks for the remainder to overtake us, I fell asleep, and on waking up found the rain pouring down in torrents, and the chief just directing Meña to return and see what the women were about. Our page arrived a little later to say that the Indians had refused to march, the occupants of our toldo alone being on their way to join us: these soon appeared, so we proceeded in the storm, having agreed that to return, after having once started, would be an ignominious proceeding.

133 We followed for some distance the valley, or rather the plain, into which it had opened out, and then ascended some abrupt rocky heights at its eastern extremity; crossing these hills, in the valleys or ravines of which incense bushes grew [137] almost like a forest, we halted for a time by the side of a rivulet flowing from a spring on the hill side.

133 After kindling a fire to warm our bodies, wet as we were 132 and chilled by the wind, which, originally west, now blew from the south with cutting violence, the sight of numerous guanaco on the heights above determined us to encircle a herd; we accordingly mounted the heights, and having completely failed in our attempt, descended to the other side. A large lagoon lay at our feet, and away to the east a succession of plains extended to the encampment called Margensho.

133 These plains were bounded for a short distance on the north side by a range of hills, which came to an abrupt termination at the end of the lagoon, on the south side by another range gradually sloping to the eastward, and on the

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western side by the rocky heights we were descending. The 133
view would have been enjoyable on a fine day, but in such a Patagonian tempest of rain and wind, landscapes were by no means appreciated. Near the lagoon was another herd of guanaco, some three thousand strong, who tempted us to a vain endeavour to encircle them, but they descried us before we could approach within a mile, and were soon lost to sight on the plains leading towards Margensho. Whilst riding down the edge of the hills Casimiro pointed out some [137]
thyme, a little of which we gathered to flavour our soup with in the evening. We then descended, and sheltered under the overhanging bank of a dry watercourse leading to the lagoon. The woman and remainder of the cavalcade shortly arrived, and loading my page with firewood, to his intense disgust and the extreme delight of every one else, we proceeded a little farther to the south, where the pasture was good, and established ourselves for the night.

The following morning early we all started to hunt, and 132
were more successful than on the previous day, though the wind was blowing a fearful gale from the S.W., with occasional storms of sleet. Towards the afternoon, by which time, having finished our hunting, we were snug enough under the toldo, it rained hard, and with the rain the Indians commenced to arrive, till before dusk a town of toldos occupied the borders of the hills.

Casimiro this evening sent for volunteers to go in with 484
me as messengers or chasquis to Patagones, on our arrival at Margensho, now but one march distant. But of those previously so desirous to go on, not one appeared, nor would any one Indian consent to lend his horses for so long a journey. The chieftain was sadly put out, and cursed the caciquillos all round. He then tried to dissuade me from going myself, saying that it was a great distance, that the desert or travesia was a fearful place, that I should probably lose my horses, that many people had starved, at the same time wishing me to lend my horses to some other Indian.

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He narrated how he himself had occupied twelve days in crossing it, and had been obliged to abandon a horse and the saddle and gear of his remaining steed, and with difficulty, nearly starved, on foot, and driving his almost worn-out horse before him, had made his way to a station.

At the same time a young Indian started to cross the desert, but lost his way, and, quoth the cacique impressively, 'His bones are there now.'

One statement, that the chañals or white thorns grew higher than the horses' heads and tore the unlucky riders' mantles to pieces as they forced their way through them, my own after-experience fully verified. I, however, adhered firmly to my original intention of going, as agreed to by him, and conveying with my own hand the letter I had written: and it was finally settled that Meña, Nacho, and I should, on arriving at Margensho, start on our journey as chasquis. Casimiro's real motive for dissuading me was distrust, as we had on two or three occasions disagreed, and once nearly come to blows; he was therefore afraid that I should, on arriving at Patagones, work against his interests and give him a bad character. Meña, who had taken a great fancy to me, volunteered for the purpose of keeping an eye on Nacho, who was my 'bête noire,' and not to be trusted.

These arrangements having been brought to a satisfactory conclusion, we proceeded to the toldo of a friend and assisted at the ceremony performed by the doctor of curing a sick child, more especially concerning the part of painting with red ochre, killing and eating a white mare.

On this occasion the parents formally invited the principal chiefs and their relations and friends, and the ceremony commenced as follows. All the men were either sitting or standing in a circle, in the centre of which sat the mother holding her infant in her arms. The doctor then came in, and under his direction the mother plastered the infant from head to foot with white clay, the wizard meanwhile mutter-

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484 search of an hour they were found, having wandered in search of better water, and, wiser than ourselves, found out a spring about two miles to the east.

The sun was up before we got away, after warming and eating the last of our food, which we had cooked overnight it was dry and dusty, and all the washing in the world could not have got the grit out of it; however, we laughed over it, saying we would soon have a bottle of wine to wash away the dirt from our throats. One thing we congratulated ourselves on was being well provided with tobacco, and although we boasted no pipe, mine having been lost at a previous encampment, Casimiro's correspondence with Foyel and Cheoeque, which I had carefully kept, provided us with
484 cigarette papers. We rode on accordingly, rejoicing, and
133 passing out of this wooded country traversed a succession of high pampas, set with small blocks of granite exactly resembling paving-stones, and placed as thickly and regularly as if paviors had been at work. The appearance of a London street undergoing repair brought this singular formation vividly to my mind. These pampas terminated in waterworn cliffs thickly strewn with stones, and as our horses scrambled like cats up the slopes, their hoofs sent the stones clattering down, and they found it hard to keep their footing. At the foot of the cliffs were watered valleys, and whilst descending into one of these valleys I noticed for the first
● [137] time the algarroba thorn, which was in fruit. There were two sorts, one with black fruit, which Nacho warned me not to touch, as it was poisonous, the other bearing yellow pods,
[262] which though somewhat dry, as the season was so advanced, we plucked and ate as we rode along, the taste proving something between tamarinds and peach.

576 Near a lagoon in one of these valleys we halted for a few minutes, and on pursuing our journey espied a horseman with a troop of led horses approaching from the opposite side. I had halted for a moment and saw my companions rein up, and racing up to know the cause, observed him. When within

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200 or 300 yards, all halted; and Nacho rode forward, and 576
ceremonious explanations ensued, followed by formal introductions. He was a Pampa Indian outward bound to join those mentioned as having passed us eastward of Margensho; he gave us news that Jackechan's, Teneforo's, and other Indians were in a place called Trinita, some four hours' gallop only distant. When he found that I was 'Anglish,' he spoke in high praise of my countrymen whom he had met in Rio Negro.

This man was a perfect picture; he was splendidly mounted, and had a troop of horses all as good as the one he bestrode. He was well dressed in ponchos and white drawers, and wore a silk handkerchief round his head. Over his saddle was a poncho containing, as we supposed, a store of yerba, flour, or other luxuries, and he had a bold, careless, good-humoured face, with restless eyes; altogether he gave one an idea of the imaginary generous bandits one reads of in novels, and to make the character complete it turned out afterwards that he had almost certainly stolen the horses from Trinita.

After five minutes' conversation, we started in opposite 484
directions, and our party pressed on at speed. From the steep hill above the valley we saw, to our joy, the smoke of hunting parties apparently not far off. However, it was four o'clock when we arrived in the vicinity of the fires in a green pastured valley. From one of the two toldos pitched there, a man emerged with a matè pot in his hand and a bombilla or reed used for imbibing matè, like straws for sherry cobblers, in his mouth. As these people proved not to be the Indians we wanted, after saluting him we galloped on, and crossing the valley, where we had to jump our horses over a brook, ascended the opposite hill. A new growth of [137]
bush growing sixteen feet high, with long switches like osiers, forced itself unpleasantly on our attention, as, when riding fast, they sprang back into one's face in the most painfully annoying manner. On the hillside we overtook and passed

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484 We were soon out of sight of the encampment at Trinita, and proceeding at either a gallop or a trot through an undulating country, in which incense, algarroba, and other shrubs abounded, arrived near sunset at a stream, on the north side of which we encamped, amongst some thick bushes. A little distance to the west lay a large salina, from which, several miles across, the place takes its name, being called Hitchin-kaik, or Salt Hill. The stream flows round one side of the salina, and is, I think, the same that we subsequently crossed near Valchita. This time we travelled in great style, the women having brought with them stores of horse-meat and yerba.

263 After dinner we all sat round the fire and took a matè, and some of an Indian sweetmeat, a yellow paste made from the algarroba bean pounded and mixed with water. Old 000 Patricio, who had turned over a new leaf, and grown quite frisky after the drink, said that I was a fortunate man, having a wife with me; alluding to one of the wives of the cacique El Ingles, who was travelling with us to rejoin her husband near Patagones.

484 The following morning at daylight we again started, and 137 travelling over much the same description of country as on the previous day, arrived about midday at the place where Teneforo had left his cattle. Here we dismounted and refreshed ourselves off the round berries about the size of a turnip-radish, the fruit of a small plant growing by the margin of the water, which had a very pleasant taste. The river here had a fringe of tussocks of pampa grass, under which we reclined and smoked.

484 The cattle were grouped about amongst these tussocks, 133 and Golwin, Jackechan's son with the light hair, amused himself by vain attempts to count them. After half an hour's dawdling we proceeded, leaving behind one of Meña's horses which was done up, and, following more or less the line of the river, we arrived, about three P.M., at the encampment of Valchita. As it was early in the day, some of the party

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521 the tea came from, and various other questions evincing a considerable amount of information; and wound up by proposing that I should set up a trading establishment near the Chupat; Jackechan—who, if any one can claim it, is the real lord of the soil—having volunteered to cede the ground to me. In the event of establishing a store in that neighbourhood, this astute Indian considered that all the Indian trade would be taken out of the hands of the people of Patagones, who notoriously used false weights, besides charging exorbitantly for all articles supplied to the Indians.

484 About two P.M., as the rough shingle had already begun
133 to tell on our horses' feet, a halting-place was found near a laguna containing rain-water of the colour of *café au lait*. The horses were for the present let loose, to pick up the best meal they could off the stunted grass near the borders of the lagoon. Before dark most of them were tethered, and a careful watch kept all night, lest they should return to Valchita in search of pasture and water. After a lengthened conversation by the fireside—in which I was informed that the track we were travelling was called Pigs' Road, from
[134] wild pigs, or perhaps peccaries, having been killed near one of the lagoons in the route—we wrapped ourselves in our mantles and sheltered ourselves like hedgehogs under the bushes, from time to time getting up to look round for the horses. Next day we rode over the same interminable
137 desert of stones, and bushes of the following descriptions: chañal or whitethorn; picayun, furnishing the best firewood; the osier-like switches before described; black bush, which is useless for burning, owing to the pestiferous smell it emits; algarroba, incense, which are, however, very scarce; and some others whose names I was unable to procure. The chañal is the only one that impedes the traveller's progress, as the thorns are large and sharp. In the other road (more to the west), which we had avoided, although the distance is shorter across the travesia, and therefore more used by the Tehuelches, who dread this crossing, especially in summer

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or for small parties, the chañal grows to the height of ten to fifteen feet, and, like the 'waitabit' thorns in Albania, renders fast riding impossible. 137

This day we were about to start hunting, when a demi-john of rum was discovered in a bush. This put an end to the sport, for, although it was hidden again in another place, enough was taken out to render most of the party talkative, a bottle or two also being reserved for discussion at the camp fire. 425

At four P.M. we encamped by the side of a lagoon similar to the previous one, and, our Valchita water being finished, diluted the rum with meal and water about the consistency of Spanish chocolate. I forgot to state that in the excitement of the 'find' the horses were not looked after, and on mustering to proceed, one of Nacho's had disappeared, and, although carefully searched for, he was not found again. 484

The next day, despite the dissipations over night, we were in the saddle at daybreak, and had hardly traversed a league of this wearisome waste when we came suddenly upon seven wild horses. An effort made to surround them failed, owing to the difficult nature of the ground; but the failure was to me fully made up by the magnificent spectacle of these splendid creatures careering in their untamed strength and beauty across the plain. 136 484

We subsequently hunted and killed guanaco and ostrich, and also saw some hares and partridges. At about ten A.M. our eyes were gladdened by the sight of the sea, and presently the level plain rose into more undulating country, and from the crests of the elevations at times a full view of the inlet called the Laco de San Antonio presented itself. 133 484

Smoke was visible ahead, and we accordingly pushed on, and made a long and rapid march, the surface being here altogether free from the small stones which had previously caused so much damage to the horses' feet. That night we halted, as usual, by the side of a lagoon, the water of which was not more than two inches deep.

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the river. A large troop of horses can scarcely find pasture, 133
and after the rapid journey would not be in a condition for
their riders to attack with success, if opposed vigorously by
people able to defend themselves.

This district[1] appeared to form a distinct and well-defined 136
limit between the habitats of various animals; as, for instance,
the Rhea Darwinii, or smaller ostrich of Patagonia, and the
Rhea Americana. The latter, according to my experience,
is never found to the south of it, and I am at a loss to under-
stand how Mr. Cunningham could have met with any speci-
mens of it, as he seems to imply.*

The Tehuelches often described the larger Rhea as found
north of the travesia, and as distinct from that hunted in
their country. They also particularly insisted on the fact
that the Gama, or deer—abundant in the Rio Negro valley
and the country north of it—is never met with south of the
travesia. The same remark is true of the Viscacha and the
Aguarra (Lupus manatus), though the latter is probably to
be met with in the spurs of the Cordillera.

Patagonia may thus be properly considered as cut off by the
Rio Negro and the line of the Cordillera, and possessing its
own races and a separate Fauna and Flora.

It may be added that only one species of armadillo, the
Quirquincho (Dasypus minutus, Gay), occurs within these
limits. The algarroba and other bushes, though found in 137
and near the borders of the travesia, do not occur south of
its immediate vicinity.

It was a joyful hour for all when, on the fourth day, after 484
galloping from dawn till ten o'clock, we at length came in
sight of the valley, still three miles distant, where large [137]
willows—which, by the way, are unknown in Patagonia, save
a few at Chupat, probably introduced by the settlers—
marked the winding course of the Rio Negro. We halted
at the head of an abra, or lateral opening which ran up [133]
into the barranca from the main valley, and saw in the

[1] [i.e. the travesia, or desert—Analyst]

* 'Natural History of the Straits of Magellan,' p. 134.

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horse they can catch; whilst the girls play at making miniature toldos, and sitting in them.

The Indians evince great affection for their children, indulging them in every way, and never chastising them for freaks or acts of mischief. They are inveterate gamblers, manufacturing their own cards out of hide, and will sometimes remain two or three days without food, as it is unlucky to eat whilst playing, absorbed in games of chance, on which they stake all their possessions. The men, also, when opportunity offers, race their horses, winning and losing heavy stakes on the result; but I am bound to say that foul play is unknown, and all debts of honour are scrupulously paid on the spot. They also play a game with stones resembling the "knucklebones" of English school-boys, and a game of ball, played by eight players, four on each side, within a ring marked by a lazo laid on the ground: two balls are used, made of hide stuffed with feathers; the player throws the ball up from under the thigh, and strikes it with his hand at the adversary, each hit counting a point.

They are dependent for food almost entirely on the chase; the statements that they eat raw meat have probably arisen from their custom of sometimes eating the heart, marrow, liver, blood, and kidneys, raw. The meat is invariably cooked, that of the ostrich being preferred. The most usual method of cooking on the hunting ground is to prepare the bird so as to form a bag, enclosing the meat with hot stones, which is placed on the embers, the broth being thus retained. In camps, they also roast the meat on spits, or sometimes boil it. The iron pots are, however, more generally used for frying out the grease or marrow. Their occasional vegetable diet consists of the roots of a species of wild potato, found, however, only in a few localities, a description of spinach, and a few other plants, when procurable. They also eat the leaves of the dandelion, which is frequently met with in the grassy valleys; and wild currants, strawberries, apples, and piñones, when in the parts where they abound. In fact, they readily eat any fruit or vegetable products obtainable; and are great consumers of salt, obtained in sufficient quantity from various salinas. They occasionally chew a species of gum which exudes from the incensebush; this, however, is intended as a dentrifice. Intercourse with settlements has taught the Tehuelches the uses of tobacco, sugar, zerba, and rum; none of which, however, are looked upon as indispensable, with the exception of tobacco, which is always prepared for smoking by a mixture of chips of wood: many of them, however, neither smoke nor drink.

On the birth of a child, if the parents are rich, *i.e.*, own plenty of mares, horses, and silver ornaments, notice is immediately

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second; and even if so far successful, there was no boat to take me from the accursed land. And how could I conceal myself from the Indians till a boat should arrive? They would miss me; and, long before any possible communication with my vessel, would be hunting me down with horses and dogs. Not a wood or thicket had met my eye on the dreary waste I traversed the day before. I tried to devise some other plan, but none offered itself. It was this or nothing.—and this was next to nothing. Grown desperate, at last, I determined to make an effort.

After lying some time, listening to the heavy breathing of the sleepers, and satisfying myself that none of the company were awake, I raised myself as noiselessly as possible, and stole towards the front of the wigwam. Casting a furtive glance backward, I could see that the old chief was restless; either he had feigned sleep, or some evil spirit had waked him just at the wrong time. To go immediately back would too plainly betray my purpose; so I walked very calmly and deliberately into the open air, and stood as if star-gazing; the old fellow, as I plainly perceived, all the time watching me from the lodge. In a short time I walked quietly back to my dark retreat, and found him where I had left him, lying very coseyly, as if nothing had happened to disturb his slumbers. Once more stretching myself on my uneasy couch, I lay two hours or more, still revolving the same unsolved problem in my mind. At length, all appearing to be sound asleep, I decided to venture a second attempt; and, in the event of failure, to make the best of it for the present. Stealthily as possible I crawled from among them, slid out of doors, and crouched upon the grass. Could I be

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through which I passed were viewed with a calmness that had been before unattainable, and which is now scarcely credible, on recollection. So true is it that our strength is unknown to ourselves till it is thoroughly tested.

The hope of immediate release, however, was at an end; my savage captors, it seemed, must be looked upon as for an indefinite period my masters and companions; and I had nothing at present to do but to divert myself by a study of their manners and habits; to consult my safety by a close study of their character, and of the ways and means by which so to adapt my deportment to it as to win their confidence, to disarm hostility, and to seize opportunities.

PATAGONIA, as it offered itself to my observation, more than answered the descriptions of geographers, — bleak, barren, desolate, beyond description or conception, — only to be appreciated by being seen. Viewed from the Straits of Magellan, it rises in gentle undulations or terraces. Far as the eye can reach, in a westerly direction, it assumes a more broken and hilly appearance, and long ranges of mountains, extending from north to south, divide the eastern from the western shore. The soil is of a light, sandy character, and bears nothing worthy the name of a tree. Low bushes, or underwood, are tolerably abundant, and in the valleys a coarse, wiry grass grows luxuriantly. Streams of water are rare. The natives draw their supplies principally from springs or pools in the valleys, the water of which is generally brackish and disagreeable.

The variety of animal is nearly as limited as that of vegetable productions. The guanaco, a quadruped allied to the lama, and with some resemblance to the camelopard,

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respond to these precious names, at once tortured and strengthened me. These, and the thought that perhaps, after patient endurance, Divine Providence would restore me to the objects of my famished affections, made life still dear. These strengthened me to suffer and to strive.

As I crawled out of the lodge. to look upon the sun, and breathe the pure air, and be refreshed by breezes untainted with the breath of cruel men, it came into my mind that some palatable or even tolerable species of plant or root would be wholesome for me. On looking about, there presented itself a specimen of large dock, such as is common in the United States; a weed of humble pretensions, but why not worthy of a trial? With what strength remained at command, I began a process of "extracting roots," with good success. Taking a quantity into the hut, and roasting them in hot ashes, they were found to be not distasteful; I filled my pockets with them, and abandoned flesh-diet for a little time, to the sensible, though gradual, relief of my sufferings. Fortunately we had a season of bad weather, which prevented any advance movement for four or five days, and gave me time partially to recover strength. I could not sooner have kept my seat on a horse; and, if the alternative had been presented, the Indians, as I very well knew, would sooner have knocked me on the head than have allowed me to hinder their march for a day. A powwow was held over another horse, unserviceable alive, and therefore marked for diet; but this time I did not compete for any part of his carcass, my pocket-stores being quite sufficient, and more attractive. But in the fate of the poor beast I read

DESCRIPTION OF THE SOUTHERN COAST OF THAT REGION OF THE SOUTH COMMONLY CALLED PATAGONIA

The harbor of Santa Elena is a good one for all types of ships and is situated on the 40° line of southern latitude. Sweet water is to be found only in a glade to the west, filled by the winter rains as they are held by a ridge which lies across the glade's mouth near the beach. Inland, some four or five leagues, the Indians reported the presence of some small springs. All the terrain is rocky except for the small valleys, in which there is good grass and an abundance of espinillo firewood. The Indian chief who rules this section is called Ayzo; his jurisdiction stretches up to the harbor of San Gregorio. He said that from the coast westward toward the mountains there are some 70 leagues of habitable land, but the land beyond that limit is absolutely uninhabitable by man or beast. Hares are very abundant here, being like small antelope and very good to eat; quirquinchos, [type of armadillo--Translator] also good eating, have shells which the Indians use as pans or plates; pumas have flesh which is very savory, juicy and tender, and is like the roasted breast of a turkey; there are a few guanacos too, some partridges and many ostriches. The Indians subsist on all of these, as also on horse meat, which they have in great abundance and which is their favorite food. Fish, in which the harbor abounds, is of the kind which we call borriquete and pejerey, both of which are delicious.

The harbor of San Gregorio is situated at 45° 4′ latitude south. It is not very secure and its entrance is bad owing to its rock strewn bottom and weak anchorage. The terrain which surrounds it is rocky and rugged; one must go inland some 5 leagues [65] before striking water. The mountain chain is about as far from this harbor as it is from that of Santa Elena, according to the Indians. This land is even more sterile than the former. The Indian chief who controls these lands is called Gorgona. The game and fish are the same as in the previous place but the Indians do not eat the fish since they do not know how to catch them and lack the necessary implements for doing so. In the cove called Camarones there is an abundance of shrimp, as there is also in San Julian and Puerto Deseado, and a kind of fish called gallo; but as already mentioned, the Indians do not make use of them. There is here quite a lot of espinillo firewood, and the rock is very solid and hard.

The gulf of San Jose is south of cape Matas, which is at the same latitude as San Gregorio; from the point at which its mouth begins to cape Blanco, there are 50 leagues. The northern shores have been explored by small ships to a point about 40 leagues to the west. There are

133 many havens there, protected by numerous islands and sandbanks. The coast is not as high, but the land is even more barren than that of the [136 312 313] other harbors, there being neither water nor grass, although firewood is not altogether lacking, especially inland. The Indians said that the gulf continues toward the west almost up to the mountains, that some springs flow into it there and that it is impossible to cross the mountains to the other side. They added that there is much espinillo brushwood in the [487] region, going from north to south, through which they have cut paths in order to get through, and should they ever deviate from these paths, they become lost. The southern shores of the gulf, they say, are more arid than the northern, but the fauna is the same as in the others. The [622] Indian chiefs who rule this territory are two brothers, called Chaiguas and Enis.

Puerto Deseado is situated at 47° 48′ of southern latitude; it is a good harbor but of difficult entry because of the narrowness of its mouth and the violence of the currents which flow in it. The coast is [312 313] very high and craggy; there is firewood and in the gullies there are some small springs of sweet but slightly brackish water, some 14 in all, which [136] can take care of any need. Game is the same as it was in the other parts; there are innumerable sea lions and seals and an abundance of guanacos. [622] The chief who controls these lands is called Ulquiquenque; he said that the mountain chain is about 20 "sleeps" from the harbor, which must be about 70 leagues, and also that it is impossible to cross over to the other side, that his people have never crossed nor seen other Indians cross the mountains. In this district there is white, black, red and other [135] colored rock, and a little marble in small broken pieces. [66] The [314] earth also is of various colors and the Indians use it to make their paints. [136] There are also many seals and sea lions on the islands in the haven.

The harbor of San Julian is located at 49° 21′ of southern latitude and is the best on the coast, although the entrance to it is difficult for an unpracticed person because of the bank at its mouth and two others which are inside. The terrain also is the best on the whole coast, not at all rocky and more fertile, as we found out when we were there the three years which the settlement lasted from 1781 to 1784 [sic]. The closest [312] source of water is about a league from the beach, and is made up of some wells filled by the overflow from a spring which lies about a league and a half away. There is ample firewood in all the dells, all of which [313 137] also abound in grass and water, the terrain being made up almost entirely of such gullies, and of nameless hills. The mountain chain is 70 leagues away toward the west, and at its base there are three cove-like depressions in each of which there is a lake fed by the snow which melts on the mountain tops. I explored this region at the foot of the mountains

133 entirely and could find no pass, it being impossible even for the animals
to cross over to the other side, all passages being closed off by snow
[484] most of which has frozen solid and is, as it were, petrified. This find-
ing made plausible the assertion which the Indians make to the effect
that they have never crossed the mountains here or in any of the other
places already named. From the first of the three lakes mentioned there
flows a small river which runs into the haven of Santa Cruz; from the
second, located to the south of the first, springs the stream which the
Indians call Chalia, which flows into the Rio Grande de Santa Cruz; the
last and southernmost of the three lakes gives birth to the Rio Grande de
Santa Cruz, which flows into the haven of the same name, situated at
622 50° 12' of southern latitude. The chief who lives in this district, which
comprises the land between Puerto Deseado and the Rio de Santa Cruz
[sic], is called Camelo, and we called him Julian. He is one of the
chiefs with the largest following in his nation; his lieutenant is a son-in-
law of his called Onos, and he lives in the vicinity of the Santa Cruz
lakes.

133 Fifteen leagues from the Santa Cruz river there is another stream,
fed by the mountain snows, which runs in that area and turns toward the
Straits of Magellan. This stream flows into the cove named Gallegos
and is not navigable, reports of other ancient travelers to the contrary.
At 52° of southern latitude is the Cabo de las Virgenes, and the Straits
of Magellan start there. The mountains come down so close to the very
Straits, at its mid point, that even here it is impossible to reach [67] the
[312] other side by land. There are here a number of small snow-fed streams,
[315] an abundance of firewood and good grasslands which support the infinite
● 131 number of guanacos that live in the region. The Indian chief who governs
[622] these lands is called Coopan. He is one of those having the largest fol-
493 lowing, but all his people travel on foot, the tents and small belongings
484 being transported by dogs. Only the chief and his women have horses,
727 which are supplied to them by their neighbor Camelo, chief of San Julian.
This state of affairs has existed for some years, in fact since Camelo in-
vaded this territory and took away all the horses. Since the invasion it
has been his policy to supply chief Coopan and his wives with horses, but
no one else, and in this way he is able to keep his southern neighbors
224 under his control. Horseless, they hunt guanacos on foot, and as there
136 are many of these animals they are able to live pretty well in this territory.
In Puerto Deseado and in San Julian a good many of these animals also
live, yet not as many, and there the Indians can hunt them with greater
ease since they have horses; but then again, the Indians here in the more
136 southern part who lack horses are themselves more agile and robust. In

he ease the soul's distress somewhat until the decreed time comes around. They are so superstitious in this matter that some are persuaded that it is desirable to put a little food and valuables in the grave so that the souls of the deceased may eat and entertain themselves; others think that this is fruitless, believing that the idol will supply them with all that is necessary. This matter is ordered in each [78] family according to the opinion of the imposter witch doctor, who deceives himself and hoodwinks the others as he pleases, no notice being taken of his inconsistencies, even when his thoughts and his commands are seen to be continually at variance. These liars make the others believe that the idol makes signs with its hands, and that it speaks, and then they repeat what they say they have heard the idol say, before the people are present at the time when the witch doctor unwraps the idol, and they see with their own eyes that it is a lie, if the witch doctor says that it has spoken or gesticulated, that is enough for them to believe the thing blindly.

They are of the opinion that nothing they can do can offend the deity they worship in any way, and so they believe that the adversities and punishments which he sends them are not because they have deserved them because of their transgressions, but because the idol just gets it into its head to treat them badly. Thus the graciousness of this power consists in having good horses, health and peace, in finding plentiful game, and in the faithfulness of their neighbors.

The number of Indians who are here settled is about 4,000 persons. They occupy the territory on the coast which has already been indicated. They cannot leave this region because they are hemmed in on the east by the sea, on the north by the Rio Negro and the Pampas Indians of Buenos Aires, and on the west and south by the mountain chain which it is impossible to cross owing to its height and because it is covered with snow the year round. So forbidding are these mountains that they are to all intents uninhabited, even by birds.

In all this land there is absolutely no lumber for construction purposes, but there is an abundance of firewood on all hands, good for burning, and the greater part of the ground is covered with wormwood, <u>cebadilla</u>, thyme and <u>gramilla</u>. All the land is rugged and cut up into hills, gullies and valleys. One of these latter is to be found twenty leagues away from San Julian, and is a very pleasant place which the Indians call Cuema. There are in it innumerable springs with good water. In most of the gullies and valleys springs are to be met with at a distance of one, two, three or four leagues from the shore. It is improbable that these pass up